

ELECT

Energetic Leadership Educating Citizens Together

Arkansas

May 2004

News on Voting in Arkansas from Secretary of State Charlie Daniels

Volume 1 • Issue 1

www.sosarkansas.gov

501-682-1010

New Law Requires ID for First-Time voters

★ **F**irst-time voters who registered by mail will be required to provide an approved form of identification under new voting laws.

Individuals who registered to vote by mail after January 1, 2003, and did not include a copy of the required identification must present ID on their first visit to the polls. Acceptable forms of identification are a valid Arkansas driver's license or photo ID, a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows the name and address. Voters who do not present the required form of ID may vote what is called a "Provisional Ballot." The local election commission will review the Provisional Ballot, determine whether it may be counted, then notify the voter of the result.

Casting a Provisional Ballot

A Provisional Ballot may also be required in cases where the voter's name does not appear on the precinct voter registration list. The voter must sign an affirmation that he or she is a registered

voter in the county and is eligible to vote in that election. Election officials must then provide written instructions on how they will be notified that their vote was counted. Individual votes that are challenged by a poll watcher may also be treated as Provisional Ballots.

Fail-Safe Voting

Fail-Safe Voting is being retained as another measure developed to ensure eligible voters are not turned away. It permits registered voters who move to an address within their current precinct to cast a ballot and fill out a change-of-address form. Persons who move to a new address within the county but outside the precinct where they were registered may vote at their new polling site and fill out a change of address form.

Procedures for casting Provisional Ballots and Fail-Safe Voting are detailed in the Voting Rights and Election Law posters that are being provided to the counties by the Secretary of State. These posters must be displayed at all polling sites.



Secretary of State Charlie Daniels

As the May 18 primary draws closer, I'm glad to bring you this first issue of **ELECT Arkansas**, a newsletter for election officials around the state. It will update you on issues that have an impact on Arkansas's elections procedures and our state's voters.

In this issue, you'll get the latest on the Help America Vote Act, including news on grants coming to Arkansas. With the federal Election Assistance Commission in place, states are now able to move forward with election reform. HAVA-mandated changes that election workers should pay particular attention to in the upcoming election are new identification requirements for first-time voters and as guidelines for Provisional and Fail-Safe voting.

You'll also read about a major campaign designed to boost Arkansas's voter turnout. Voting rates are in steady decline with only about half of the state's eligible adults casting their ballots in recent elections. Decisions are made by those who choose to participate, and it is my hope that we can give more citizens the incentive to make that choice. My staff is implementing a voter outreach program called ELECT — Energetic Leadership Educating Citizens Together. It will utilize the media, publications and the Internet to reach out to voters in new ways.

I welcome your feedback on our voter outreach programs and other election issues that may arise. Feel free to contact my office with your comments or questions, (501) 682-1010.

State Plans Published; HAVA Funds Coming

With the federal Election Assistance Commission in place, election reform efforts are now moving forward with more guidance on the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), according to Secretary of State Charlie Daniels.

Arkansas is set to receive almost \$28 million in funding to help implement the sweeping election reforms mandated by HAVA over the next two years. Without that financial support, state and county governments would have borne the high cost of election reform.

Release of funding has been contingent on the EAC publishing state implementation plans, which assess current election procedures and equipment and define each state's strategy for ensuring HAVA compliance. Those plans were published in the Federal Register on March 24, 2004, clearing the way for grant allocations by May 7.

(See HAVA Cont. on Page 2)





Important Election Dates to Remember

April 23 Absentee ballots due to county clerks from county board of election commissioners.

Deadline for county BEC to appoint election officials.

May 3 Deadline for county clerks to mail notice of change in polling sites. Early voting begins.

May 11 Deadline for absentee ballot applications to county clerks by mail or fax.

May 17 Deadline for county clerks to receive absentee ballots (except for overseas voters).

May 18 Preferential Primary Election and Nonpartisan Judicial General Election.

June 8 General Primary Election (Run-Off).

Internet Opens World of Information to Voters

As more citizens turn to the Internet for information, Secretary of State Charlie Daniels is enhancing his official website to provide resources to voters. New features available through www.sos.arkansas.gov not only provide news on candidates and voting procedures, but also target young voters.

The Secretary of State's elections web page, www.ARElections.org, lists photos and information on more than 235 candidates who filed for office in March. County clerks will also report results to this site on election night, which allows the public to view unofficial results as soon as they are available.

Young Voters

One of the biggest responsibilities Secretary Daniels has is educating and informing young voters, a group that has shown a steady decrease in voter turnout. To reach this Internet-savvy generation, Daniels has developed www.wannabeheard.org to show young adults the power of their vote.

Another tool for this important age group is a voting guide, created in conjunction with the "Declare Yourself" voter education project. The booklet is a simple registration and voting guide for voters ages 18 to 24. Download it at www.sos.arkansas.gov.

Online Arkansas

The Secretary of State has teamed with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to develop an invaluable tool for elections officials. Online Arkansas, <http://argis.ualr.edu/website/districtfinder>, will use 2000 Census data to match voting districts with an individual's address. It's a convenient tool that provides easy access to useful information for voters and county clerks alike. Users can choose to view lines for legislative districts, precincts, school districts, townships and more. Daniels encourages you to visit this preliminary site and offer your feedback as it continues to develop.



CANDIDATE FILING — More than 235 candidates filed for office at the State Capitol during the filing period in March. Bob Mathis (D) of Hot Springs (left) was the first to file with Secretary of State Charlie Daniels for re-election to House Seat 25. The primary election is May 18.

HAVA (continued from front page)

In December, the U.S. Senate confirmed four EAC members, which was a milestone in helping states forge ahead. The commission is charged with evaluating and approving state plans, allocating funds and establishing voting system standards.

"States have been waiting for guidance from the EAC on how to implement changes under HAVA," said Arkansas Secretary of State Charlie Daniels. "As the commission becomes fully operational, we are getting a much clearer picture of how to proceed."

Replacing Voting Systems

A major step for Arkansas will be replacing outdated punch card and lever voting systems in 13 Arkansas counties. The original deadline for replacing these machines was January 1, 2004, but the delay in establishing the EAC meant no standards for selecting new systems. Daniels opted to join 24 states in requesting an extension until January 2006, which will give the Secretary of State's office additional time to choose a system that best meets Arkansas's needs. Daniels said he prefers to wait for new technology to be developed and proven secure, accurate and efficient.

Daniels also joined 44 states requesting a waiver on establishing a statewide voter registration list. The new deadline will be 2006.

"We don't want to do anything that would jeopardize the county clerks' ability to effectively maintain the voter rolls during a presidential election year," Daniels said.

Although progress on HAVA implementation has been delayed, there are now encouraging signs that Arkansas and other states will be able to put their plans into action. Secretary Daniels and his staff are ready to move forward and believe the next six months will hold major changes in Arkansas's elections procedures.

State Board Certifies Election-Official Trainers for All Counties

By Susie Stormes, Director, State Board of Election Commissioners

The State Board of Election Commissioners appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Secretary of State's newsletter. We are proud to be able to work with the Secretary of State for the improvement of Arkansas' electoral process.

The State Board has recently completed training sessions to certify election-official trainers for each of the 75 counties. We were VERY pleased with the exceptional turnout for the 11 sessions held: 100% of the counties participated. A total of 213 individuals attended the sessions from early February through March 2. Of those, 204 people were certified to conduct poll worker training in their respective counties. State Board staff will be attending a sampling of training sessions across the state over the next month to evaluate the effectiveness of the "train the trainer" approach.

Training of election monitors began on April 3 to fulfill requests to the State Board to observe elections in several counties. State Board staff expects to train approximately 50 people, including several members of the Secretary of State's staff, to be certified monitors for future elections.

Finally, we are excited to announce that we are at last ready to distribute our new election procedures manual to all members of the county boards of election commissioners. We expect the books to be distributed to all counties by the end of April. This comprehensive manual will be a valuable, practical resource for county election commissioners, who in the past have often had to oversee their county's elections with little guidance.

If we can assist you with any of your training needs, please call the State Board of Election Commissioners at (800) 411-6996.

Outreach Programs to Boost Voter Turnout

With only about half of Arkansas's qualified adults going to the polls on Election Day, Arkansas Secretary of State Charlie Daniels is launching a multi-faceted voter outreach program to educate Arkansans on new election laws and to boost voter turnout. Known as **ELECT** – Energetic Leadership Educating Citizens Together – the program includes a variety of publications, events and media campaigns designed to inform and empower voters.

"Arkansas has a fairly high rate of voter registration with about 80 percent of eligible adults registered," Daniels said. "But only about half of our eligible adults actually turn out to vote. They're letting other people make decisions for them."

One Vote Counts

One component of the **ELECT** program is a campaign that emphasizes the importance of every vote. The "One Vote Counts" message will be conveyed through public service announcements, voter registration drives and other means.

"Many people feel their one vote really won't matter," Daniels said. "But we've seen how just a handful of votes can make all the difference."

The most dramatic example of that margin came during the 2000 presidential election when about 530 votes – out of over 105.4 million cast across the nation – could have swung the Electoral College results.

wannabeheard.org

While young voters have a good rate of registration, they aren't participating on Election Day. Research conducted

by the National Association of Secretaries of State shows that only 20 percent of the nation's 20 year-old registered voters actually go to the polls.

The **ELECT** program targets Arkansans under age 25 with a campaign known as "wannabeheard.org" (Wanna Be Heard). TV ads, a website and publications will illustrate to young Arkansans that without a vote, they have no voice.

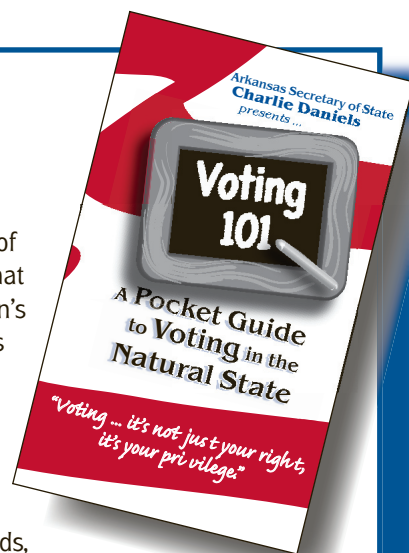
"More young adults are voting for the next American Idol than are participating in the election process," Daniels said. "We have to give them a reason to care enough to go to the polls."

Take A Vote Break

The Secretary of State is urging voters to take advantage of early voting with a "Take a Vote Break" slogan. By voting in the two weeks preceding Election Day, Arkansans can choose a time that's convenient and avoid crowds at the polls. "Early voting is easy and it only takes a few minutes," Daniels said.

Voting 101

Daniels is also publishing a plain-language booklet with step-by-step guides to registering and voting in the state. To request copies of "Voting 101: A Pocket Guide to Voting in the Natural State," call the Elections Division, (800) 482-1127.



Secretary of State begins Election Intern program

A new internship program for high school students will help young people get an early start in Arkansas politics.

Secretary of State Charlie Daniels invites high school sophomores and juniors to apply for the ELECT intern program. Registration forms will be available this summer with 150 interns selected by the fall.

ELECT interns will conduct monthly citizenship activities at their respective schools to help get their fellow students interested in the political process. They can choose to conduct voter registration drives, serve as poll workers, organize a mock election or other activities.

Please pass this information along to any teachers who might be interested in sponsoring students for this program. For more information, contact Carder Hawkins in the Secretary of State's Elections Division, (800) 482-1127, or jchawkins@sosmail.state.ar.us.

ADA Grants Awarded to 16 Counties

Secretary of State Charlie Daniels has announced that 16 counties have qualified for grants that will help make polling sites fully accessible for Arkansans with disabilities.

The Secretary of State's Elections Division is administering the federal funding that was made available through the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). The grants may be used to purchase equipment or improve accessibility at polling sites.

"We're very excited to be able to offer these grants to help make sure all Arkansans can freely exercise their right to vote," Daniels said. "These funds will help several smaller counties, in particular, that haven't been able to afford the improvements they've needed."

ADA grants are being awarded to the following counties:

- Ashley — \$416 for accessible doorknobs.
- Calhoun — \$4,402 for signs, thresholds, ramps and parking.
- Clark — \$3,305 for ramp, pad and doorknobs.
- Cleveland — \$385 for door thresholds.
- Conway — \$2,591 for thresholds.
- Dallas — \$375 for accessible ramps.
- Franklin — \$975 for accessible ramp to the county courthouse.
- Johnson — \$2,425 for pavement, ramps, signs and thresholds.
- Marion — \$480 for accessible walkway.
- Perry — \$2,756 for doorknobs, pads and thresholds.
- Pike — \$1,875 for parking, sidewalks, handrails and restrooms.
- Scott — \$1,500 for accessible ramp.
- Sevier — \$105 for signs and doorknobs.
- Sharp — \$2,000 for pad and ramp.
- Stone — \$9,557 for signs, voting booths, magnifying sheets, walkway and ramps.
- Van Buren — \$430 for accessible ramp.

County officials interested in applying for ADA grant funding should contact Harold Grimmert or Rob Hammons at (501) 682-5070.



Charlie Daniels
Secretary of State

Room 256, State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201-1094
www.sos.arkansas.gov
(501) 682-1010

Presort Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Little Rock, AR 72201
Permit No. 2855